In the Claims

1.   (Currently amended) A system providing guided buying decision support within an electronic marketplace environment, comprising:

a server operable to interact with buyers to receive procurement parameters for items;

an option generator operable ~~to~~ to:

receive procurement parameters for a particular item needed by a particular ~~buyer,~~ buyer;

determine one or more acceptable item-supplier combinations consistent with the procurement parameters for the item, ~~and;~~ and

generate one or more recommended options for communication to the buyer, each recommended option specifying a service through which it is possible to procure the item consistent with procurement parameters, each recommended option comprising one of:

a recommended purchase from the supplier currently offering the item at the lowest price consistent with the procurement parameters;

a recommended auction in which the item is currently being auctioned under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters; and

a recommended reverse auction that may be initiated with respect to the item under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters;

the server further operable ~~to~~ to:

communicate to the buyer a recommended course of action specifying the recommended option that should be selected to give the buyer the best opportunity to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters and at the lowest price; and

interact with the buyer to receive a selection of a particular recommended option; and

a manager application operable to automatically initiate the service specified in the selected recommended option in an attempt to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters.

2.   (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein the procurement parameters comprise:

one or more parameters each specifying a characteristic of the item;

one or more parameters each specifying a date by which the item must be procured; and

one or more parameters each specifying a characteristic of an acceptable supplier of the item.

3.   (Currently amended) The system of Claim 1, wherein the server is operable to communicate to the buyer a first display through which the buyer may input the ~~procurements~~ procurement parameters and a second display through which the buyer may select a recommended option.

4.   (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein the server is operable to communicate to the buyer a single display through which the buyer may select a recommended option or input one or more alternative procurement parameters, the display allowing the buyer to see in substantially real time the impact of the alternative procurement parameters on the recommended options.

5.   (Canceled)

6.   (Currently amended) The system of ~~Claim 5~~ Claim 1, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended purchase and the recommended purchase is based on data obtained from a catalog, an inventory listing, or a bid/ask exchange through which the supplier is offering the item.

7.　　(Currently amended) The system of ~~Claim 5~~ <u>Claim 1</u>, wherein <u>at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction and</u> the circumstances of the recommended auction are selected from the group consisting of:

the date the auction is scheduled to complete is consistent with a delivery date procurement parameter and the last bid is below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination;

the auction is the currently running auction expected to close at the lowest price; and

the auction is the currently running auction with the highest probability that the buyer will win the auction with a bid below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

8.　　(Original) The system of Claim 7, wherein the probability of winning an auction is determined according to the length of time the auction has already been running, the length of time the auction will continue running, and the percentage of buyers that could participate in the auction but have not yet placed bids.

9.　　(Currently amended) The system of ~~Claim 5~~ <u>Claim 1</u>, wherein <u>at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction and</u> the probability of the buyer winning the recommended auction is provided to the buyer to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended auction instead of the recommended purchase.

10.　　(Currently amended) The system of ~~Claim 5~~ <u>Claim 1</u>, wherein <u>at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction and</u> the manager is operable to recommend a bid for placement in the recommended auction.

11.　　(Original) The system of Claim 10, wherein the recommended bid is a proxy bid with specified increments and a ceiling equal to the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

12.   (Currently amended) The system of ~~Claim 5~~ <u>Claim 1</u>, wherein <u>at least one</u> <u>recommended option comprises a recommended reverse auction and</u> the circumstances of the recommended reverse auction are selected from the group consisting of:

there are at least a specified number of suppliers that could satisfy a delivery date procurement parameter if the reverse auction lasted for a specified length of time; and

the reverse auction has the highest probability of all evaluated reverse auctions that the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

13.   (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the probability the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination is determined according to:

the length of time the reverse auction can be allowed to run consistent with a delivery date procurement parameter; and

the number of suppliers that could satisfy the delivery date procurement parameter if the reverse auction was allowed to run for that length of time.

14.   (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the probability the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination is provided to the buyer to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended reverse auction instead of the recommended purchase or the recommended auction.

15.   (Original) The system of Claim 1, further comprising a planning engine operable to receive status data for the buyer from one or more associated enterprise systems, the status data specifying one or more of the procurement parameters.

16.   (Canceled)

17.   (Original) The system of Claim 1, further comprising an electronic marketplace that supports the server, the option generator, and the manager application.

18.   (Currently amended) A method of providing guided buying decision support within an electronic marketplace environment, comprising:

receiving procurement parameters for a particular item needed by a particular buyer;

determining one or more acceptable item-supplier combinations consistent with the procurement parameters for the item;

generating one or more recommended options for communication to the buyer, each recommended option specifying a service through which it is possible to procure the item consistent with the procurement ~~parameters;~~ parameters, each recommended option comprising one of:

a recommended purchase from the supplier currently offering the item at the lowest price consistent with the procurement parameters;

a recommended auction in which the item is currently being auctioned under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters; and

a recommended reverse auction that may be initiated with respect to the item under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters;

communicating to the buyer a recommended course of action specifying the recommended option that should be selected to give the buyer the best opportunity to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters and at the lowest price;

receiving a selection of a particular recommended option; and

automatically initiating the service specified in the selected recommended option in an attempt to procure the needed item consistent with the procurement parameters.

19.   (Original) The method of Claim 18, wherein the procurement parameters comprise:

one or more parameters each specifying a characteristic of the item;

one or more parameters each specifying a date by which the item must be procured; and

one or more parameters each specifying a characteristic of an acceptable supplier of the item.

20.   (Currently amended) The method of Claim 18, further comprising communicating to the buyer a first display through which the buyer may input the ~~procurements~~ <u>procurement</u> parameters and a second display through which the buyer may select a recommended option.

21.   (Original) The method of Claim 18, further comprising communicating to the buyer a single display through which the buyer may select a recommended option or input one or more alternative procurement parameters, the display allowing the buyer to see in substantially real time the impact of the alternative procurement parameters on the recommended options.

22.   (Canceled)

23.   (Currently amended) The method of ~~Claim 22~~ <u>Claim 18</u>, wherein <u>at least one recommended option comprises a recommended purchase and</u> the recommended purchase is based on data obtained from a catalog, an inventory listing, or a bid/ask exchange through which the supplier is offering the item.

24.   (Currently amended) The method of ~~Claim 22~~ <u>Claim 18</u>, wherein <u>at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction and</u> the circumstances of the recommended auction are selected from the group consisting of:

the date the auction is scheduled to complete is consistent with a delivery date procurement parameter and the last bid is below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination;

the auction is the currently running auction expected to close at the lowest price; and

the auction is the currently running auction with the highest probability that the buyer will win the auction with a bid below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

25.   (Original) The method of Claim 24, wherein the probability of winning an auction is determined according to the length of time the auction has already been running, the length of time the auction will continue running, and the percentage of buyers that could participate in the auction but have not yet placed bids.

26.   (Currently amended) The method of ~~Claim 22~~ Claim 18, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction, the method further comprising providing to the buyer the probability of the buyer winning the recommended auction to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended auction instead of the recommended purchase.

27.   (Currently amended) The method of ~~Claim 22~~ Claim 18, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction, the method further comprising recommending a bid for placement in the recommended auction.

28.   (Original) The method of Claim 27, wherein the recommended bid is a proxy bid with specified increments and a ceiling equal to the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

29.   (Currently amended) The method of ~~Claim 22~~ Claim 18, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction and the circumstances of the recommended reverse auction are selected from the group consisting of:

that there are at least a specified number of suppliers that could satisfy a delivery date procurement parameter if the reverse auction lasted for a specified length of time; and

the reverse auction has the highest probability of all evaluated reverse auctions that the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

30.   (Original) The method of Claim 29, wherein the probability the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination is determined according to:

the length of time the reverse auction can be allowed to run consistent with a delivery date procurement parameter; and

the number of suppliers that could satisfy the delivery date procurement parameter if the reverse auction was allowed to run for that length of time.

31.   (Original) The method of Claim 29, further comprising providing to the buyer the probability the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended reverse auction instead of the recommended purchase or the recommended auction.

32.   (Original) The method of Claim 18, further comprising receiving status data for the buyer from one or more associated enterprise systems, the status data specifying one or more of the procurement parameters.

33.   (Canceled)

34.   (Original) The method of Claim 18, wherein the method is performed using components of an electronic marketplace.

35.   (Currently amended) Software for providing guided buying decision support within an electronic marketplace environment, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

receive procurement parameters for a particular item needed by a particular buyer;

determine one or more acceptable item-supplier combinations consistent with the procurement parameters for the item;

generate one or more recommended options for communication to the buyer, each recommended option specifying a service through which it is possible to procure the item consistent with the procurement ~~parameters;~~ parameters, each recommended option comprising one of:

a recommended purchase from the supplier currently offering the item at the lowest price consistent with the procurement parameters;

a recommended auction in which the item is currently being auctioned under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters; and

a recommended reverse auction that may be initiated with respect to the item under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters;

communicate to the buyer a recommended course of action specifying the recommended option that should be selected to give the buyer the best opportunity to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters and at the lowest price;

receive a selection of a particular recommended option; and

automatically initiate the service specified in the selected recommended option in an attempt to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters.

36.   (Original) The software of Claim 35, wherein the procurement parameters comprise:

one or more parameters each specifying a characteristic of the item;

one or more parameters each specifying a date by which the item must be procured; and

one or more parameters each specifying a characteristic of an acceptable supplier of the item.

37.   (Currently amended) The software of Claim 35, further operable to communicate to the buyer a first display through which the buyer may input the ~~procurements~~ procurement parameters and a second display through which the buyer may select a recommended option.

38.   (Original) The software of Claim 35, further operable to communicate to the buyer a single display through which the buyer may select a recommended option or input one or more alternative procurement parameters, the display allowing the buyer to see in substantially real time the impact of the alternative procurement parameters on the recommended options.

39.   (Canceled)

40.   (Currently amended) The software of ~~Claim 39~~ Claim 35, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended purchase and the recommended purchase is based on data obtained from a catalog, an inventory listing, or a bid/ask exchange through which the supplier is offering the item.

41.   (Currently amended) The software of ~~Claim 39~~ Claim 35, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction and the circumstances of the recommended auction are selected from the group consisting of:

the date the auction is scheduled to complete is consistent with a delivery date procurement parameter and the last bid is below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination;

the auction is the currently running auction expected to close at the lowest price; and

the auction is the currently running auction with the highest probability that the buyer will win the auction with a bid below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

42.　(Original) The software of Claim 41, wherein the probability of winning an auction is determined according to the length of time the auction has already been running, the length of time the auction will continue running, and the percentage of buyers that could participate in the auction but have not yet placed bids.

43.　(Currently amended) The software of ~~Claim 39~~ Claim 35, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction, the software further operable to provide to the buyer the probability of the buyer winning the recommended auction to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended auction instead of the recommended purchase.

44.　(Currently amended) The software of ~~Claim 39~~ Claim 35, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended auction, the software further operable to recommend a bid for placement in the recommended auction.

45.　(Original) The software of Claim 44, wherein the recommended bid is a proxy bid with specified increments and a ceiling equal to the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

46.　(Currently amended) The software of ~~Claim 39~~ Claim 35, wherein at least one recommended option comprises a recommended reverse auction and the circumstances of the recommended reverse auction are selected from the group consisting of:

that there are at least a specified number of suppliers that could satisfy a delivery date procurement parameter if the reverse auction lasted for a specified length of time; and

the reverse auction has the highest probability of all evaluated reverse auctions that the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination.

47.   (Original) The software of Claim 46, wherein the probability the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination is determined according to:

the length of time the reverse auction can be allowed to run consistent with a delivery date procurement parameter; and

the number of suppliers that could satisfy the delivery date procurement parameter if the reverse auction was allowed to run for that length of time.

48.   (Original) The software of Claim 46, further operable to provide to the buyer the probability the buyer will procure the item below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended reverse auction instead of the recommended purchase or the recommended auction.

49.   (Original) The software of Claim 35, further operable to receive status data for the buyer from one or more associated enterprise systems, the status data specifying one or more of the procurement parameters.

50.   (Canceled)

51.   (Original) The software of Claim 35, wherein the software is executed using components of an electronic marketplace.

52.   (Currently amended) A system providing guided buying decision support within an electronic marketplace environment, comprising:

means for receiving procurement parameters for a particular item needed by a particular buyer, determining one or more acceptable item-supplier combinations consistent with the procurement parameters for the item, and generating one or more recommended options for communication to the buyer, each recommended option specifying a service through which it is possible to procure the item consistent with the procurement ~~parameters;~~ parameters, each recommended option comprising one of:

a recommended purchase from the supplier currently offering the item at the lowest price consistent with the procurement parameters;

a recommended auction in which the item is currently being auctioned under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters; and

a recommended reverse auction that may be initiated with respect to the item under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters;

means for communicating to the buyer a recommended course of action specifying the recommended option that should be selected to give the buyer the best opportunity to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters and at the lowest price; and

means for interacting with the buyer to receive a selection of a particular recommended option; and

means for automatically initiating the service specified in the selected recommended option in an attempt to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters.

53.   (Currently amended) A system providing guided buying decision support within an electronic marketplace environment, comprising:

a server operable to interact with buyers to receive procurement parameters for items;

an option generator operable to:

receive procurement parameters for a particular item needed by a particular buyer;

determine one or more acceptable item-supplier combinations consistent with the procurement parameters for the item; and

generate one or more recommended options for communication to the buyer, each recommended option specifying a service through which it is possible to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters, each recommended option being selected from the group consisting of a recommended purchase from the supplier offering the item at the lowest price consistent with the procurement parameters, a recommended auction in which the item is being auctioned under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters, and a recommended reverse auction that may be initiated with respect to the item under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters;

the server further operable to provide to the buyer the probabilities the buyer will procure the item in the recommended auction, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, and in the recommended reverse auction, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended auction or recommended reverse auction, respectively, instead of, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended purchase, the recommended purchase, the server further operable to interact with the buyer to receive a selection of a particular recommended option; and

a manager application operable to automatically initiate the service specified in the selected recommended option in an attempt to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters.

54.　　(Currently amended) A method of providing guided buying decision support within an electronic marketplace environment, comprising:

receiving procurement parameters for a particular item needed by a particular buyer;

determining one or more acceptable item-supplier combinations consistent with the procurement parameters for the item;

generating one or more recommended options for communication to the buyer, each recommended option specifying a service through which it is possible to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters, each recommended option being selected from the group consisting of a recommended purchase from the supplier offering the item at the lowest price consistent with the procurement parameters, a recommended auction in which the item is being auctioned under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters, and a recommended reverse auction that may be initiated with respect to the item under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters;

providing to the buyer the probabilities the buyer will procure the item in the recommended auction, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, and in the recommended reverse auction, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended auction or recommended reverse auction, respectively, instead of, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, the recommended purchase;

receiving a selection of a particular recommended option; and

automatically initiating the service specified in the selected recommended option in an attempt to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters.

55.   (Currently amended) Software for providing guided buying decision support within an electronic marketplace environment, the software being embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

receive procurement parameters for a particular item needed by a particular buyer;

determine one or more acceptable item-supplier combinations consistent with the procurement parameters for the item;

generate one or more recommended options for communication to the buyer, each recommended option specifying a service through which it is possible to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters, each recommended option being selected from the group consisting of a recommended purchase from the supplier offering the item at the lowest price consistent with the procurement parameters, a recommended auction in which the item is being auctioned under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters, and a recommended reverse auction that may be initiated with respect to the item under circumstances consistent with the procurement parameters;

provide to the buyer the probabilities the buyer will procure the item in the recommended auction, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, and in the recommended reverse auction, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, below the lowest price quoted against an acceptable item-supplier combination to allow the buyer to decide whether to select the recommended auction or recommended reverse auction, respectively, instead of, if the one or more recommended options comprises a recommended auction, the recommended purchase;

receive a selection of a particular recommended option; and

automatically initiate the service specified in the selected recommended option in an attempt to procure the item consistent with the procurement parameters.